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An Alternate Field Trip Vehicle

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AN ALTERNATE FIELD TRIP VEHICLE

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In situations where institutional vehicles or public transportation facilities are not available or financially feasible for student field trips, leased recreational vehicles from private sources offer an economical and efficient means of transporting a few or as many as 15 to 20 persons per vehicle. Recreational vehicles offer a wide variety of seating accommodations, sleeping arrangements for generally six to twelve persons, a refrigerator and stove for food storage and preparation, and a toilet and bathing facility. Recreational vehicles are often engineered to provide maximum access to off-the-road outcrops and recreational sites. Because **you** drive the vehicle there is a flexibility of scheduling that is not provided by public transportation. Many campgrounds are equipped to handle the specific needs of recreational vehicles, thus maximizing their potential.

Costs per participant are generally quite low because of the large number of persons which may be involved. Usually the total rental cost is based upon a weekly charge plus a mileage fee and gasoline costs. Rental fees range from perhaps a minimum charge of $200 to $300 per week. Actual rates are dependent upon the demand and size of the vehicle. Mileage charges range from 5 cents to 12 cents per mile. Fuel costs should be calculated based upon 5 to 8 miles per gallon.

In March of 1979, the author, with a group of 23 individuals in two motor homes, completed a 4,000 mile field trip lasting 12 days at a total cost of $2,100 for transportation. This cost was slightly more than 2 cents per passenger mile, a cost far below that available to students individually.

Not only do recreational vehicles provide low cost transportation, they also allow faculty-student discussion, social interaction and an opportunity for some moving about by participants in the vehicle. With fewer vehicles there is less likelihood for a convoy to get fragmented, and it is easier to point out to students geologic details as they go by.

A motor home also makes a good base from which to operate a field trip, even if you are stationed at a single location for several or more days. There is usually very adequate storage space for maps, specialized equipment and specimens which may be collected. Normally there is a table for writing notes or doing map work. It may be a very comfortable traveling office.

There are some disadvantages to using motor homes for field trip transportation. They are rather large and will not negotiate some trails and roads, making some locations unavailable. They must be driven by someone in the group, and because of their size may seem at first

unwieldly. There may be restrictions in your state regarding the type of drivers license required to operate a large vehicle of this sort under these circumstances. There is also a need to determine the type and amount of insurance maintained by the vehicle owner.

Before using a vehicle of this type, it would be wise to examine the kinds of vehicles which are available, determining the insurance coverage which specific rental agents provide (particularly with respect to liability coverage and collision damage) and any legal restrictions which your state has regarding the licensure required to operate a motor home in the manner described here.

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Winter Birdfeeding

Winter's freezing winds and snow should remind us that many birds maintain permanent residency instead of migrating to warmer climates. Besides finding adequate shelter, their most important task is obtaining a sufficient and steady supply of food. Here they are aided by many devotees of non-game wildlife. In 1975, the U.S. Forest Service estimated that one out of every five American households winter feed birds, expending $170 million dollars annually.

While a variety of feeders can be obtained commercially, you can easily make one from readily available household materials. The National Wildlife Federation pamphlet, *Recycle for Birds*, shows you how. Single copies are free, with additional copies 15 cents each. Write: National Wildlife Federation, 1412 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Feeders should be placed in sheltered locations, protected from the wind, and preferably near trees or heavy shrubbery. To keep thieving squirrels out of your feeder, fix a metal cone shield on the supporting post.

When your feeder is ready, what should you do to fill it? Research has shown that a mixture of 50 percent sunflower seeds, 35 percent proso millet and 15 percent cracked corn is a good general purpose feed. Foods other than seeds that birds like are: suet, bread crumbs, doughnuts, peanut butter, nuts and fruit. Once you decide to feed birds in the winter, honor your commitment. Birds develop feeding habits and become dependent on feeders for food — if the food supply dries up before spring, they may suffer or even die.

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Energy Booklet

The following energy booklet is available free from Edison Electric Institute, 1111 19th Street, Washington, D.C. 20036: *Emerging Energy Technologies: Energy Research, Answers to Your Questions.*